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INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

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INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

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Spring 1982

Folly Beach Journal Reflects Filmmaker's Life

Lyn Eldridge

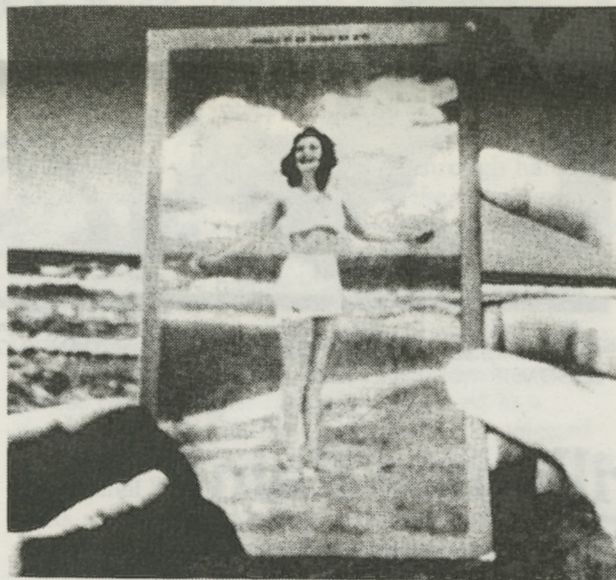
"Folly Beach is washing away and no one can stop it. I didn't try, but some people did. When I first arrived, a week after a hurricane, there were huge bulldozers working night and day, whenever low tide came, to scoop sand from the lower beach and stack it into dunes. It didn't help."

Independent animator Jan Millsapps' latest film *Folly Beach Journal*, is a visual journal of her sojourns to Folly Beach, composed of a two-year collection of both animated and live action sequences which reflect briefly upon certain aspects of the beach at particular times. The shoreline is observed and translated with an intense personal vision; birds fly to the abstracted sound of wings flapping, and the sun sets over the ocean in a sped-up-live-action sequence, with an amplified beach band playing in the background. Like a literary journal, this film is composed of anecdotes, observations, expositions, and lyrical phrases. Like the ocean, *Folly Beach Journal* is cyclical, with the natural ebbs and flows of the filmmaker's life reflected in her film.

"The whole *Folly Beach* film was sort of symbolic of a very long process of returning (to South Carolina) and coming to terms with what I was and what I had been."

As a "crazy romantic notion," Jan Millsapps returned from Boston and deliberately decided to isolate herself at Folly Beach with the general idea of working on a film. "I think the seashore is in particular a very powerful kind of environment to confront...and it was an overwhelming experience which I think comes through the film." One animated sequence is composed of a cycle of simplified drawings depicting the animator at the

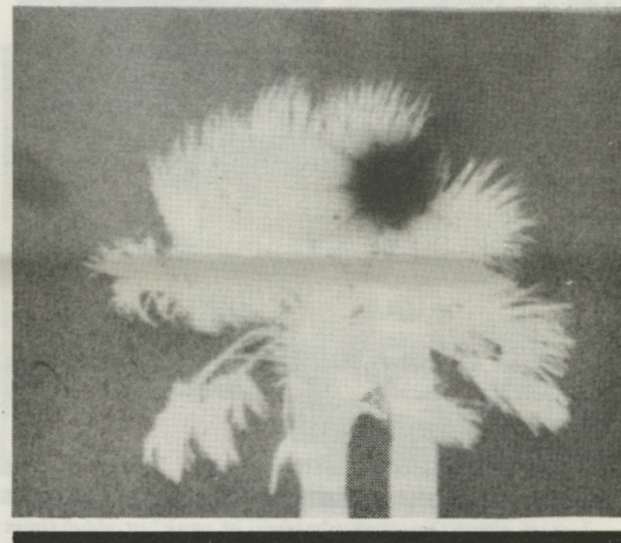
Jan used a variety of tools and techniques in creating *Folly Beach Journal*. While she was creating these pieces of the film, she conceived the idea of making a journal; however, she became aware of the limitations of a journal in that it does not make a cohesive statement. Later, after Jan had accepted a position to teach animation at University of South Carolina, she was able to reflect upon her experiences at the beach. After shooting additional footage, she created *Folly Beach Journal*. Like a bound book, the covers, or beginning and ending of the film, reflect her new environment, working as an independent animator at U.S.C. The mid-section of the film takes the viewer into some of the facets of the beach and into the depths of the ocean and the filmmaker's personality.



"It's As Good As It Looks" - The Horizon line of a poem is translated into a real horizon line in Jan Millsapps' FOLLY BEACH JOURNAL.

One of the influences upon Jan Millsapps as she created this film was an article by Denise Levertov about "organic poetry," or finding a form for poetry in an organic way, which is what the filmmaker did with *Folly Beach Journal*.

Folly Beach Journal is a personal communication between the filmmaker and the audience, a communication which often takes the form of post cards sent from the beach in which the film-



One in a collection of local images which make up Jan Millsapps' FOLLY BEACH JOURNAL.

maker "drops a line" to the audience which is later translated into a "horizon line." It also documents the filmmaker's coming to terms with herself over a two year period. "The period itself was sort of a cycle, something that had to be completed in that when I got cut off from the beach and moved here (Columbia, SC), there was some sense of not having worked it out. I found myself going back to Folly Beach over and over, but then finally getting the film out at a real low point (in my life) and then realizing that was what the film was about—the film was about a sinking and then rising again." The film takes place around, above and under water, often paralleling the filmmaker's emotions. "The rising takes place very quickly, almost unaware, it just happens. Then the secondary process of taking all that material that makes the experience in the film, and actually showing me making a film with it (the last shot of the film) indicates a total kind of control, that everything you've been through you've got in your hands and you're working with it and you're making something out of it."

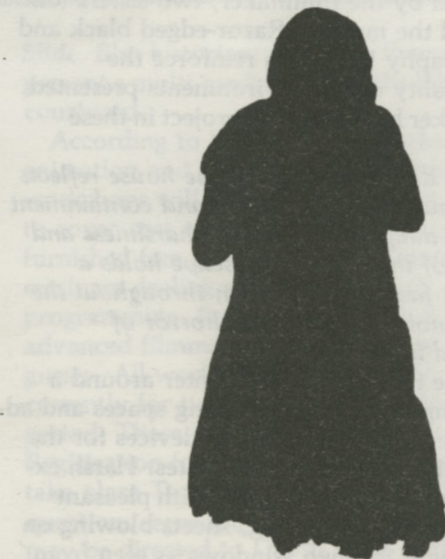
Jan has not visited Folly Beach since she finished this film. "There was a sense of completion of this encounter...the purposes of discovering myself and the film—using the ocean as a kind of conflict and a 'more powerful than' kind of experience."

Folly Beach Journal, 10 minutes, color; available from Picturestart and from Jan Millsapps, 2406 Monroe Street, Columbia, SC 29205.



Beach/water motif is carried through FOLLY BEACH JOURNAL by Jan Millsapps. Here a shadow wave laps at the filmmaker's feet.

beach; this sequence was created as a "post card" to send to friends when she arrived at the beach. The idea of cycles, animated as well as natural, reoccurs frequently in the film as the filmmaker experiences the beach and herself.



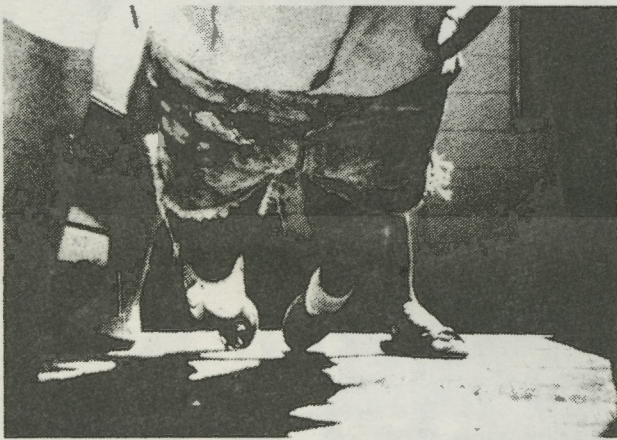
A mixture of animation and live action sequences makes up Jan Millsapps' FOLLY BEACH JOURNAL. Pictured here is one of the paper cels from an animation sequence.

Reviews

YASECKO'S *Dancing Lessons* - "Visual Pleasure"

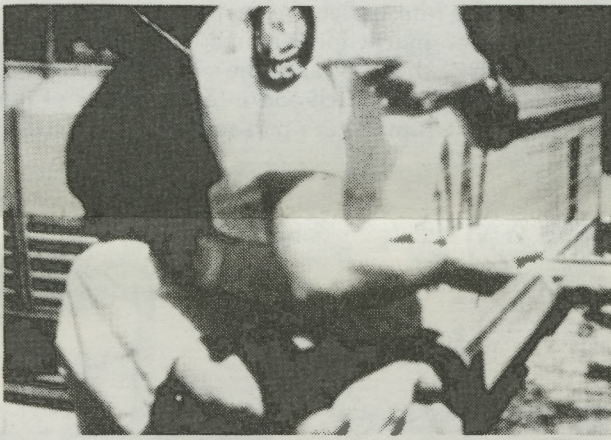
Susan Leonard

Nancy Yasecko's recent film *DANCING LESSONS* had a curious inception. While on location to film the second space shuttle launch for Yasecko's documentary *GROWING UP WITH MISSILES*, the film crew grew restless at launch delays. They shot one roll of film for themselves, playfully exhibiting sexual roles, power plays and fantasies for their peer camera. Instead of documenting the Space Age ingenuity of the 80's, the film collected another phenomenon, an anthropological study that could occur should a South Seas Margaret Mead visit Cocoa Beach in 1981 to study the natives and, for the sake of objectivity, place the camera in the hands of the natives.



Two of Nancy Yasecko's film crew at work? at play? (from *DANCING LESSONS*).

Yasecko's role as anthropological collagist began with the viewing of the found footage and her instinctive returning to the same five scenes: special combinations of camera muggings against backdrops of Winnebagos and parking lots. Through optical printing and editing, she emphasizes the gestures to the point of eloquence. The five scenes are structured against a seemingly primitive beat. The soundtrack is, in fact, additional sound recordings by the same film crew who, during another launch delay, improvised a camper's cupboard band of boxes, cans and sticks rapping out a snazzy rendition of the theme song from *MY THREE SONS*. The primitive beat is structured with and against the images; shifts to syncopation draw on the anticipation of the viewer.

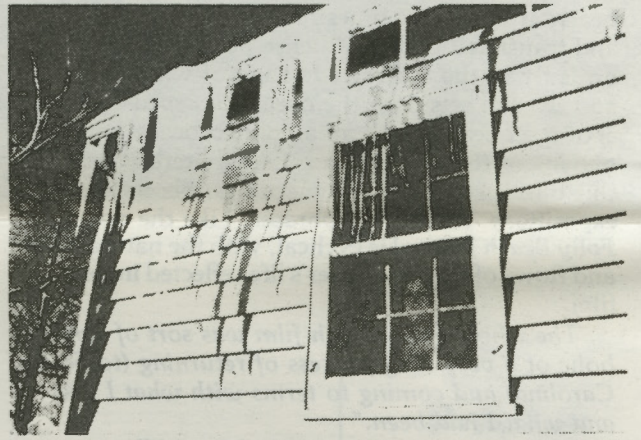


One of the Cape Canaveral security police gets a dancing lesson from a member of Nancy Yasecko's film crew (*DANCING LESSONS*).

The film viewer takes the place of the opening scene's observer who snaps photos of the couple slow dancing in the parking lot. As voyeur to the interplay between actors and camera, we see scenes repeated and slowed to velvet gestures, erotic in their visual pleasure. Attention is drawn to ourselves involved with the daily dance ritual. The playful, cultural lesson is delightfully smooth and memorable thanks to Yasecko's instruction.

Yasecko is a skilled, emerging filmmaker whose attention to the collection and reconstruction of found footage has produced *COMPOSITION* (1979), *SOFT SAND* (1980), and *NEBRASKA AVENUE* (1981).

DANCING LESSONS. Nancy Yasecko. 1982. 16mm. Color. Sound. Optical Printing. 3½ min.



"Razor-edged black and white photography is used to reinforce the surrealistic quality of the environments presented" Strommer's mother looking through window from inside (*MOTHER*).

Harshness, Brilliance Paint Landscape for Strommer's Film

Michael Fleishman

The architecture of personal, emotional or historical space is often problematic, complexly textured, and culturally revealing. The body of Virginia filmmaker Joan Strommer's work is filled with finely-crafted resonances of personal explorations of familial geography, metaphorically represented through the objects, gestures, rituals, and characters that form the discourse of her family practice—memory and hypothesis.

Sitting at the editing table looking over family footage can be illustratively akin to probing the personal family album through the eyes of childhood, artist, analyst—as constructor and destructor of memory and fantasy. Residing both in the work as maker and subject, and as editor/critic/observer, places the filmmaker at a renaissance point in spatial perspective to her family and her film project.

MOTHER is a second work in a planned trilogy of family considerations (*TWINS*—1978, *FATHER*—in progress). Birth (*EVA*—1976), death (*LILL*—1975), and marriage (*WEDDING*—1976) are other related themes previously examined by the filmmaker. *MOTHER* structures a number of psychological oppositions through filmic dialectics. Images of internal/external, isolation/communication, win-

ter/summer, mother/daughter, and memory/presence, populate a haunting landscape of the tentative territory of the mother-daughter bond inhabited by the filmmaker, two sisters (one her twin), and the mother. Razor-edged black and white photography is used to reinforce the surrealistic quality of the environments presented.

The filmmaker has stated her project in these terms:

"A seasonal documentation of the house reflects the possible inwardness, isolation and containment of the mother-daughter bond. The harshness and yet brilliance of the winter landscape holds a distressing yet fascinating tension throughout the film which is not unlike the real horror of possession and inversion."

Many of the film's situations center around a neat white frame house whose living spaces and adjacent areas serve as metonymical devices for the expression of internal emotional states. Harsh exterior winter scenes are contrasted with pleasant summer views of grass-cutting, sheets blowing on lines and looking through windows as seen from outside and inside the house. Fragments of everyday ritual become powerfully charged through their arrangement, repetition, and variance of pattern.

This repetition of elements forms structures which metaphorically picture a relationship characterized by inwardness, isolation and distance. The film's schematic implies that the filmmaker and the mother (and by translation, the viewer) are always looking across a space, memory, or the emotional gap between them. And by design, these looks raise questions of where their corresponding reaction shots exist—in conventional space? in memory? or in the mind of the filmmaker/daughter?

The film's opening sequence establishes this "creative geography." A shot of an icy house exterior is followed by a slightly closer shot of the house with the mother barely visible in a darkened window. Next a young dark-haired woman (the filmmaker or her twin sister) sits facing the mother across a snowy picnic table. The young woman turns to look at the camera? the house? or...Cut to a cool interior of the house, as the camera pans past several large windows with open blinds and a large ominous plant to a commercial-filled TV screen.

Outside, daughter and mother face each other nervously until the daughter looks into the snowy distance and directs the mother's attention to something visible in the next shot—one of the twins moving through a snowy jungle of vines. Cut to the house interior as a twin moves toward the windows, opens the blinds and gazes outside. Her gaze links us to the next shot—a repeat of the twin and the vines. Returning to the interior point of view, the young woman closes the blinds and, looking

consternated, walks toward the TV. The closure of this sequence is a repeat shot of the mother and daughter at the picnic table. At the cut, the twin is looking into the camera? the house? or into the preceding memory sequence while the mother looks off-screen. The young woman turns to face the mother and the sequence ends.

The feeling from this cutting strategy is implied movement across the borders of isolated spaces—uncomfortable, uneasy glances across the slash-mark of the mother/daughter dichotomy. Seasons, settings, and tenses change across these glances, highlighting internal oppositions and desolation over the power of what usually joins. What is joined appears unjoinable, making a stark contrast of the differences between mother and daughter.

Much of the film divides into metaphors of isolation/containment, or possible freedom. Both the filmmaker as character (or twin) and the mother serve as eye-line initiators of these sequences. Several sequences begin with shots from the outside of the house as the mother opens the window and gazes out. In one case, the upward motion of the window is carried over to the surfacing movement of a sister rising from beneath the water in a lake. The motion is slowed and appears dream-like, suggesting the mother's power across distance to influence the daughter's emotional direction.

Water appears as a representation of freedom, confinement, contemplation or domestication in various cases. One twin is seen during summer and winter seated and meditatively gazing at the bank of a stream. The third sister is identified with other water scenes such as rising and submerging under a lake. In one case, just her feet and legs extend into a framed open beach vista, suggesting possible creative freedom. She's also associated with a repeated series of images of a small, rocky promontory. A series of shots reveal a small pool of water reflecting the sky, a foot entering the rocky terrain next to the pool, and finally the pool's location on the promontory surrounded by a larger body of water. As context changes so does meaning. Images of the sky's expansiveness are seen surrounded by rock, then by water inverting metaphors of freedom and confinement.

Underlying the visual track is a music score by Virginia composer Billy Kidd, with moody eruptions and dark emotional colors suggesting the violence and psychological tensions inherent in the images. Woven into this track and sung almost inaudibly through a flute part are statements distilled from a long taped interview with the film-

maker's mother. Phrases include "the door closes...she would just walk away...it is human to have feelings...where are her feelings, why can't she express herself..." These almost subliminal fragments are detectable in tone if not literal meaning and become textured clues sketching the nature of this relationship.

The project of point of view is further layered by repetition of certain landscapes seen through different camera perspectives from objective to subjective. For example, sheets blowing on a line in the backyard of the house are seen from (1) an objective still camera vantage, (2) a moving subjective shot almost a cinema verite in nature, and (3) a more complex combination: a shot of the sheets containing the shadow of the filmmaker in frame, into which the filmmaker steps to adjust the sheets. Here, the supposed separation of the objective/subjective is called to question. The artist's shadow reminds us of the subjectivity of the behind-the-lens figure that then crosses this invisible line to offer herself also as subject.

Another interjection of this sort occurs during a summer scene in the backyard. A twin pushes a hand mower from right to left background with a large growth of flowers in the lower left foreground.

Suddenly, the mother crosses the foreground and moves toward the flowers with a reluctant garden hose. Then in a startling gesture, the filmmaker's hand appears inches in front of the camera lens, again injecting a surprise reminder of point of view. The ambiguity created by the viewer's inability to distinguish between Joan and her twin sister adds yet another layer of complexity to this idea.

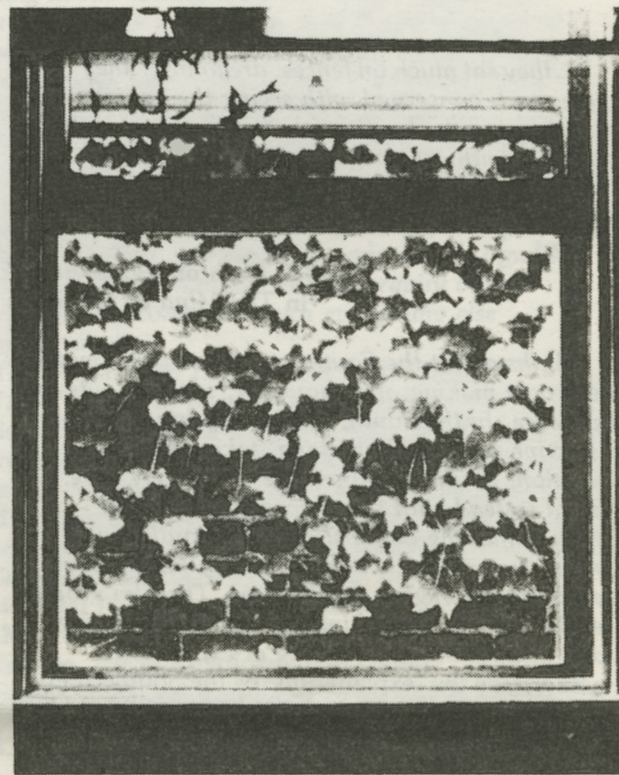
Repetition of these devices in different scenes raises important issues concerning the gray area of point of view in interpersonal relationships. While as viewer we are absorbed in translations of confinement and isolation, presented through hard-edged images involving Joan and the female members of her family, we are formally reminded of the difficult determination of cause/effect in relationships colored by memory and internalization of point of view.

Rituals—swimming, grass cutting, reading, watching, waiting—all seem to be isolated experiences whose cold clarity is formally organized as a presentation of gestures and fragments connected across open spaces by the structure of looks. There is a formal beauty in these compositions that attains a level of fascination/frustration almost as the movements of disconnected dancers we wish could

be synchronized. In MOTHER, spatial relationships are viewed as an atlas, representing internal emotional arrangements and differences whose topography the filmmaker explores.

"Since the parents are the origins of a child's identity, the life-space around father and mother is important to an understanding of one's self and relatedness to persons, environments, etc. Observing parents and their 'place' is like searching for clues for one's own identity."

-Joan Strommer



Contrasts of dark/light and interior/exterior are an integral part of Joan Strommer's film MOTHER.

MOTHER, Joan Strommer, 1980, 15 minutes, black and white. Music by Billy Kidd. Distributor, Joan Strommer, 3410 Monument Avenue, #16, Richmond, VA.

Resources

Celebration Continues

The thirteenth annual Sinking Creek Film Celebration will be held at Vanderbilt University's Sarratt Student Center in Nashville, Tennessee June 15-19, 1982.

The celebration will include three components: a showcasing of Award Films from SCFC's national competition, Guest Programs by major independent filmmakers, and Daily Workshops and Seminars (including animation and live action Super 8 production, Film Analysis, Film Criticism, programming seminars plus lecture/demonstrations for 16mm filmmakers, and a panel discussion on Cable TV programming).

Program guests this year will include George Griffin, who will screen both his commercial and non-commercial work; Steve Segal, with his film "Creation of Futuropolis"; Manfred Kirchheimer and his latest—"Stations of the Elevated"; Tony

Slide, film historian; and Don Evans, who will present a multi-media show in the lobby or courtyard.

According to David Sloss, Workshops Director, animation and live action Super 8 production workshops will be offered for a minimal fee (used to cover cost of supplies). All equipment will be furnished free of charge. In addition to the seminars dealing with film analysis, criticism, and programming, five one-day lecture/seminars for advanced filmmakers will be offered by program guests. All workshops and seminars will run concurrently for two hours a day over a five day period. There is no charge for the seminars. Registration for all programs offered by SCFC will take place Tuesday morning, June 15. Any questions regarding the workshops or seminars may be directed to David Sloss at (803) 252-0245.

Full registration (\$40 for students with ID/ \$50 general) is not required. All screenings and seminars are open on a single admission basis, according to Mary Jane Coleman, Sinking Creek's

Director. In addition, campus housing is provided for a very small fee, single or double occupancy, and campus restaurants and snack bars are available for use by Sinking Creek celebrants.

For further program details or housing and registration information, contact Dean James Sandlin, Sinking Creek Film Conference, Sarratt Student Center, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, 37240, or call (615) 322-2471.

ITL Announces Interactive Video

New York Institute of Technology's Interactive Technologies Laboratory (ITL), an addition to its research and production facilities, is now operational and capable of producing video and computer programming.

Laser-generated videodiscs, which allow the viewer to gain immediately any desired frame of

continued on page 7

Exhibition

SOUTHERN FILMS PREMIERE IN NEW YORK

...they sat much on fences, dreaming...they were much concerned with seeing the ponies run, with hearing the band, with making love, with dancing, with extravagant play... they exhibited a striking tendency to build up legends about themselves and to translate these legends into explosive actions..."

- W.J. Cash on "Southerners" in *The Mind of the South*

"Myths about the South are often of the Southerner's own making, not, however, without outside influence. In the South, neither mythmaking, nor its active cousin, filmmaking, takes place in isolation. Southern experiences are rarely pure, mixed instead with travel to and from other regions, moving about within the South proper, and movement within the Southern mind via observations, thoughts and feelings. The film product results from a kind of interior travel, beginning with inspiration and arriving at expression."

So begins the "explanation" of the Southern experience from the notes of a program entitled TRAVEL FILMS FROM THE SOUTHERN AVANT-GARDE, a collection of Southern-made avant-garde independent films assembled and recently presented by Jan Millsapps on Sunday, April 25 at the Collective for Living Cinema, New York; Thursday, April 29, at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst; Friday, April 30 at Real Art Ways in Hartford; and Thursday, May 6 at the Boston Film and Video Foundation.

The idea of the collection is, according to Jan Millsapps, "travel." She elaborated on the collection of films and how the tour came about.

"These films are going out of the South. That's the most obvious thing. I don't know that a collection like this has ever...been shown in New York, Boston and Hartford. The other thing that I noticed as I looked at all the films was that they all involve a kind of personal travel and in most cases they involve a kind of geographical travel as well. So the idea of filmmaking as a kind of experience in moving from one situation or place to another and using that experience as material to make films with...becomes...another thing. All these people are now living and working in the South, but in a lot of cases inspiration for the film or beginnings for the film came from another place, like travel to another region. Gordon Ball going to Mexico, myself going to Folly Beach. The film that Charles has been working on is about a nine- or ten-year observation of moving to a totally new and different kind of environment for him. And then some people's travel has involved coming into the South from another set of experiences. Joan Strommer's film was really made outside the South, but it is a kind of personal journey through her family relationships and the fact that she is in the South now. Lee's film involves travelling. In a lot of Nancy's work, she goes back to Florida. I don't really think there's any such thing as pure regionalism, but it's not to say that we're making films like people in other regions either, because there is something that comes out of being in this region that I think enters those films whether it's attention to the landscape or just the environment or whatever. That seems to get into a lot of these films in a lot of cases, and I think, either con-

sciously or sub-consciously, filmmakers choose their places to be and somehow that has something to do with their own internal workings as filmmakers."

DANCING LESSONS by Nancy Yasecko (Cayce, SC) was shot when one of the film crews assembled to shoot the space shuttle launch became restless and shot movies of themselves playfully exhibiting sexual roles, power plays, and fantasies for their peer camera. Yasecko reworked the footage; optical printing slows and repeats actions which become primal and erotic in their visual pleasure. 5 min.

MEXICAN JAIL FOOTAGE by Gordon Ball (Norfolk, VA) combines images shot in 1968 with a recent voice recollection relating the experiences of being among 25 gringos jailed without charge while travelling through Mexico. The images, blown up from Super 8, record daily events of the filmmaker and his fellow prisoners in a random ordering, while the narration relates the story of the experiences in a straightforward linear fashion—their arrest, their activities while in jail and their attempts to get themselves released. 18 min.



Photo by John Shealy, *The Virginian Pilot*

Independent filmmaker Gordon Ball, whose film MEXICAN JAIL FOOTAGE is included in TRAVEL FILMS FROM THE SOUTHERN AVANT-GARDE.

AQUI SE LO HALLA by Lee Sokol (Atlanta, GA). A bullfight and a magician performing sleight-of-hand tricks compose the primary imagery for a story told by a 40-year-old man describing his faith in and obsessions with love, and of his struggle with the role of a man in a macho country. A visual continuum of the desire for seduction and deception is created using close-up shots of the bull charging the blood-red cape, intercut with the

magician's hands producing red silk scarves from out of nowhere and making them vanish into thin air. 15 min.

SMALL FOCAL FIELDS by Robert Russett (Lafayette, LA) is an abstract film in which mobile color fields interact with a static grid system in an attempt to discover the potentials of visual perception. The interaction of opposing visual elements is designed to create a dialogue that contrasts motion with inactivity, symmetry with imbalance, and surface tension with depth. 5 min.

MOTHER by Joan Strommer (Richmond, VA) is, in the filmmaker's words, "an exploration of the filmmaker's relationship to her mother and her two sisters via a seasonal documentation of their house and surroundings, reflecting the possible inwardness, isolation and containment of the mother-daughter bond. The harshness and yet brilliance of the winter landscape holds a distressing but fascinating tension throughout the film which is not unlike the real horror of possession and inversion." 15 min.



Virginia independent filmmaker Joan Strommer, whose film MOTHER is included in TRAVEL FILMS FROM THE SOUTHERN AVANT-GARDE.

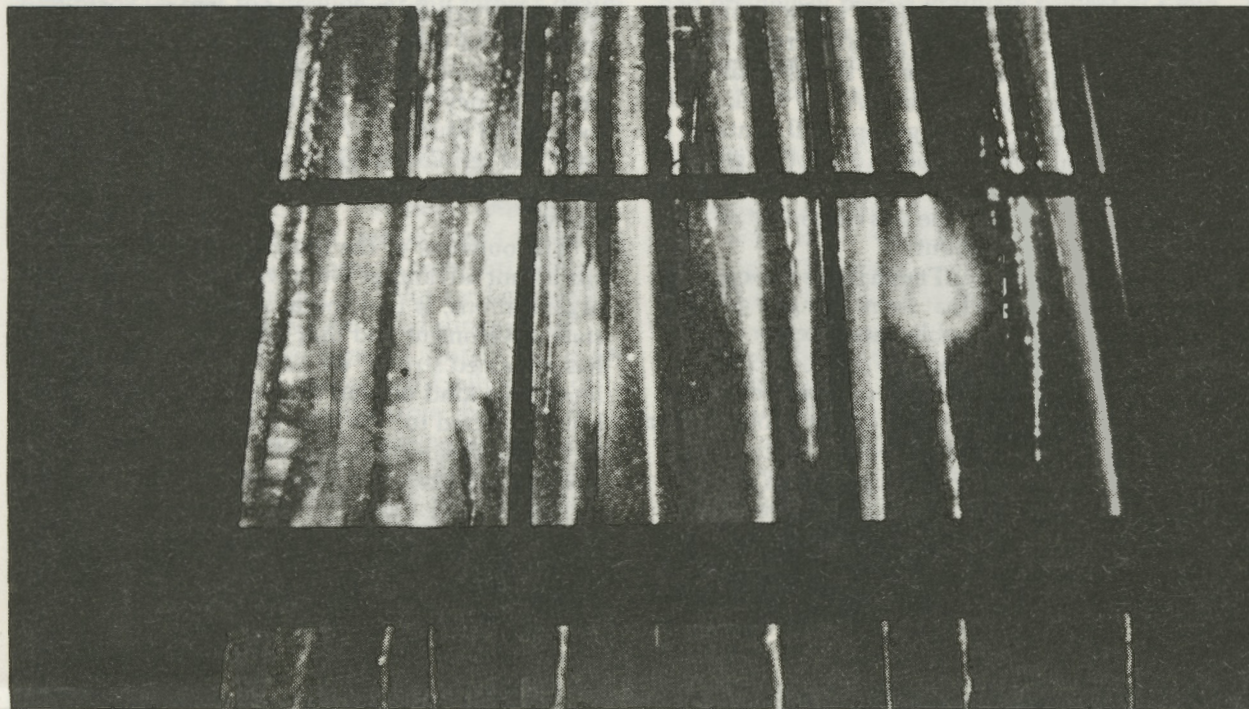
FOLLY BEACH JOURNAL by Jan Millsapps (Columbia, SC) is a film compiled from different animated and live-action "entries" collected over a two-year period. Most visual and sound images correspond somewhat to a literary journal form, i.e., some are observational, some are anecdotal, some are lyrical, etc. The theme, which came after many of the images were randomly collected, is one of the artist's coming to terms with herself via an extended encounter/romance with nature and natural cycles. 10 min.

JUST COINCIDENCE by Charles Lyman (Tampa, FL). This visual journal of an eight-year journey through Florida includes photographs of tourists (and what they come seeking) as well as natives (and what they find worthwhile to promote and invent to attract, and sometimes harvest, their fellow man). Like most explorations, the destination is, at the outset, known only in the abstract or general sense. The details of the route, the shape and meaning of the goal, are designed in the process of getting there, and in showing the pic-

tures to prove it. 20 min.

Jan commented on her own film in the collection and what it has to do with the South. "My other kinds of processes, including my creative processes, seem less inhibited here. I made a real conscious move back to the South. I mean, I was going to run away forever and live in Boston...in isolation, which, of course, meant that the only thing I could have encountered would be the environment and myself. I did, and this is what the film is about. That's probably a very extreme case of what I'm talking about—letting the environment influence you—but I think it happens. And if you're involved in self-examination, one thing you're going to think about is how where you are has to do with who you are, or how where you've come from or whatever kind of journey you've been on in your life has to do with things. I think everybody looks for and appreciates outside influences. If I lived in New York, I wouldn't be making the films that I'm making. It's kind of a personal regionalism, I guess, in that it is more than just the geography but it's the geography connected with everything else about yourself."

TRAVEL FILMS FROM THE SOUTHERN AVANT-GARDE, which was assembled with assistance from Susan Leonard of the South Carolina Arts Commission's Media Arts Center, was also shown at the Columbia Museums of Art and Science Sunday, June 6. In addition, the SCAC Media Arts Center is currently assembling its own collection of Southern avant-garde and experimental films; some of the films in the TRAVEL FILMS collection will be included in the SCAC collection. For more information contact Susan Leonard, SCAC Media Arts Center, 1800 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC, 29201, or phone (803) 758-7942.



Looking out the window, through icicles, at the harsh winter landscape (from Joan Strommer's *MOTHER*, reviewed in this issue).

Production

SCAC Media Arts Center Adds Pro Video Component

The South Carolina Arts Commission's Media Arts Center is pleased to announce the establishment of its new video access center for independent producers in the Southeast. In an effort to respond to the growing image resource needs of regional artists, the Center will make broadcast quality 3/4" video production and editing facilities available as a complement to our existing professional 16mm film equipment.

Acquisition of the equipment is designed to encourage the production of new innovative works by existing video artists and to serve as an impetus for film artists' exploration of alternative artistic tools for the production of their works. These new resources are made possible through support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the South Carolina Arts Commission.

The heart of the production system will be the JVC KY-2700 3-tube broadcast quality 3/4" color video camera and a Sony VO-4800 portable cassette recorder. The KY-2700 provides 500 plus lines of horizontal resolution, 54dB Signal-to-noise ratio, automatic white balancing, built-in genlock, color bars, and +6dB and +12dB gain. Imaging is with three 2/3" Saticon tubes and a 14:1 f/1.7 Fujinon power zoom lens. The KY-2700 is equipped with a 1.5" viewfinder and weighs approximately 12 pounds. Support production equipment includes a Cine 60 quick-charge battery belt and charger (one hour), and a Sony PVM-8000 8" portable AC/DC color monitor for field use.

The Sony VO-4800 portable recorder offers an excellent complement to the KY-2700 with 260 lines horizontal resolution and +45dB signal-to-noise ratio. Other features include fast search and automatic back-space editing, in a package weighing 22 pounds with battery and cassette.

Camera and recorder systems became available in April and a number of regional projects have already used this equipment, which rents for \$50 per day or \$250 for a seven-day week.

July will bring another exciting landmark in the Center's service to artists with the opening of our 3/4" video editing studio. Designed to provide 24-hour access for creative editing, the studio will feature two new Sony VO-5850 front-loading editing recorders and an RM-440 controller. The VO-5850 features search speeds from 1/30 to 5 times normal. High speed search is possible with KCS tape. The system permits full automatic editing with the RM-440 controller—insert and assemble, with an edit point memory system and + two frames edit accuracy with one preview.

The studio will also include two Videotek 12" color monitors (one monitor with underscan, pulse-cross and blue-gun features). A foldout studio couch is available for 24-hour accommodations as well as access to kitchen and shower facilities. The editing studio rents for \$30 per day or \$210 per week. As with our film equipment and studios, reservations are required to assure availability for

dates requested.

While the Center is new to the field of video technology, we will strive, whenever possible, to provide both technical and practical production information and resources for video producers. It is our access philosophy that certain "partnership" rights and, to a great extent, reciprocal responsibility for equipment care rests in the independent community. While the rights of access of these "partners" and the sense of trust required for its effective functioning might seem fragile qualities, we feel the independents in the region are to be complimented for their spirit of community cooperation in these areas as well as their artistic accomplishments.

The acquisition of artistic tools for accomplishment in a new media seems an appropriate time to affirm the priority of the Center's commitment to the production, exhibition, distribution and study of works by Southeastern independent image artists. The expansion of the Center into a media of the 80's is designed neither to replace our interest in film, nor shift concern from artistic conception to technological fascination. Instead we seek to widen the palette and selection of brushes available to artists whose ideas and their realization are the central justification for our services.

For more information and reservations, please contact Michael Fleishman, South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center, 1800 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC. 29201, 803/758-7942.

Comments

Spirit of Independence Thriving

Steve Lewis

If working in and with the arts has taught me anything, it has taught me that very little is certain. Lately "things" have become even less certain than ever before. So it's not surprising that so many people now are uncertain about which moves to make or not to make.

When Ronald Reagan submitted his big budget cuts, including an approximate 50% cut for the National Endowment for the Arts, one could hear the sighs and whispers in every burg from New York to Los Angeles. Some panicked right away, while some assumed the proverbial "wait and see" attitude. Speculation over what the budget cuts will mean in the field has now given way to positive action and, in some less fortunate cases, drastic action.

I knew what we were doing and feeling here at the Media Arts Center, but I was less sure about others in the region. Although by no means did I consult everyone, I managed to speak to a sampling. I wanted to know what effects the budget cuts had had already and how the cuts were influencing future plans of some of the centers in the Southeast region.

Marsha Rifkin, IMAGE Film and Video Center, Atlanta, GA: "Since I've been here, I really haven't noticed a budget cut. I'm sure that it will come to us and it will affect us. Prior to my coming, the cuts affected IMAGE to the extent that there is no longer a screening series, mainly because that category was discontinued (by the NEA). But that (series) was a luxury; it cost IMAGE quite a bit of money. I'm hopeful that this year we won't be cut heavily by the Georgia Council on the Arts. Right now, we are fundraising for the AIFVF, probably 50% more than we've ever done before. I anticipate that we'll be fundraising for other parts of our programs—for upgrading our equipment and for doing special kinds of film events. Probably we will be able to do films only in coordination with other groups. For instance, we're looking right now at doing the Film Board of Canada series, shown at MOMA in the fall, at the High Museum. As far as altering our programming, I don't truly think we have. From what I can tell so far, we haven't cut back on anything (except the screening series); in fact, we've increased things. We've increased a half-time position to a full-time position. We'll be offering at least 12 workshops every quarter. Plus we are designing specialized workshops for special interest groups in the city. For instance, we have an animation workshop right now for children. And we got a call from a TV station who wants us to put together an advanced editing course for their people.

"We're raising some of the equipment rental rates, but I'm sure that they will still be very reasonable in comparison to what is around (commercially). That will help us bring some more money in. Also we get some money from the city of Atlanta. It has given us money for the Film and Video Festival and for the Southern Circuit. This year we've requested a service grant from the Department of Cultural Affairs—money which can be used for blanket purposes.

I feel that Media Centers are going to take on a more important role as time goes on, and I'm sure it's the video part of it that is going to have the most impact. That's this whole cable business. We have experienced a growth in our membership—

people interested in video and working for Ted Turner doing Cable News stuff to make money.

It's unfortunate, but in the general stream of things media centers are more on the alternative side of your typical form of art. And I think that the alternative kinds of arts groups will continue as long as they continue to appeal to a lot of people. That is definitely a strong point for us. IMAGE has a really nice reputation in the arts communities here, and I'm very glad about it."

Sharon Ronci, Alabama Filmmaker's Co-op, Huntsville, AL: "We see that we're going to go back to the real meaning of a public media center—family based. We have to get support from our community, so we're going to have to offer programs. The Co-op is planning to have lots of programs for kids—production, workshops, young filmmakers, etc. Most of our family-oriented programs are in exhibition. We would like to make families aware of media power. The Co-op is also planning a summer workshop in media appreciation for teachers.

"Wade's leaving left us with a void, but it also gave us a chance to decide what we were going to do. We see that we're going to go back to the real meaning of a public access center, while continuing to support filmmakers and their productions by making our facilities available and by showing their films. Also, the Co-op will continue to be a station for flow-through grants—the Co-op production grants, which come from the National Endowment for the Arts.

"There were and are only two full-time positions. I haven't seen any cutbacks on staff because the pay here is particularly low. I think we'll see a lot more women who want only a part-time job, who want to do something in the community. Our long-range goal would be not to depend on state or federal funds as a primary source."

Karen Kern, New Orleans Video Access Center (NOVAC), New Orleans, LA: "The singlemost thing which affected us...was the loss of our CETA funding. Things have been pretty rough since then." (Formerly there were six people on the NOVAC staff; now Karen is the only full-time staff member.)

"We do receive money from services to the field (NEA) but it's not enough. One day the CETA person came in and informed us that our next paycheck would be our last." One week later, NOVAC experienced an 85% reduction in staff. Although NOVAC will be receiving money from the NEA this year, it won't be enough to support what they've done in the past, so they are looking for corporate support, mostly from local corporations and primarily, at this point, from the local cable company. Some staff recently received small grants to work on individual projects.

"It's been tough. We've been trying to figure out just what course we can take. The cutbacks have filtered down to the point where we do feel their effects, and corporate funding isn't as easy to raise as the Reagan Administration would have you believe, although we do get a few small contributions from local corporations."

Michael Fleishman, South Carolina Arts Commission Media Arts Center: "The primary effect that the cutbacks had on the Media Arts Center at SCAC were that the Media Arts Center had to reduce staff, but we were able to acquire video production and editing equipment. This will do two things: It will give needed support and development to video in our region and it will

provide us with another base of income and will become more important as more people turn from film to video.

"This year, even though there's been a budget cut, we don't feel we've had to make any cuts in services to artists. Because of no NEA support, we've had to delay the Southern Circuit until fall. We've initiated a fundraising plan which involves raising money for the Circuit through private and foundation sources. We had to go through a really hard and serious budget process which is enabling us to direct our resources to make them more effective.

"The outcome of the thing for us, or the significant advantage we have over a lot of other organizations, is that, because we are a part of state government and that aspect of our support has remained strong, we haven't been put into the immediate kind of bind that a lot of centers have been subjected to. We are really aware of this and feel a responsibility regionally to keep, wherever possible, the lines of communication open between people to make contact with each other and be informed of what's going on. Hopefully, things like the COSMO directory will result in some positive economic things for both the filmmakers and the organizations in the region because it promotes their skills and their works to people who can employ them.

"The other thing I see happening is that more independent filmmakers are turning to commercial work to support themselves. We are trying to work with people, like our own South Carolina Film Commission, to see that people who are technically qualified get jobs and this helps them support their work, so we don't see them as two mutually exclusive things."

All things considered, maybe things are not as bad as we had previously thought; however, this is only Reagan Budget Year Number One, so the situation could get worse, and there is substantial reason to believe that the worst is yet to come. What all this means, of course, is that if the situation does get worse, then organizations all over the country—perhaps especially those in the Southeast—will have to fight for every nickel and dime.

It is still too early to tell what effects Frank Hodsoll's appointment as chairman of the NEA will have on us all. The latest word from Washington at this writing is that Hodsoll is personally looking into every detail of the NEA's operation in an attempt to discern what's worth saving, what's not, and what's worth saving but with major changes.

Finally, you may have noticed that the INDEPENDENT SPIRIT has a new look. Thanks to Susan Leonard, Design Editor, for the many hours she has put into obtaining a newly-designed format. There are other changes as well. Because of cutbacks in our staff here, we will require more solicited copy from those of you in the region who are interested in contributing. A letter or phone inquiry is appreciated, and unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by a pre-posted envelope, if return is requested. We are especially interested in running more reviews of Southern filmmakers' new works. If you are interested in having a film reviewed, or if you are interested in writing a review, please contact me by mail or telephone. As always, letters to the editor are welcome.

The INDEPENDENT SPIRIT is still distributed free of charge. If you would like to be included on our mailing list, write or call at (803) 758-7942.

I look forward to a good year as the new editor of the SPIRIT.

Technical Sincerity

Gordon Ball

Yesterday, a friend who had asked to use a film of mine in a program, said to me "Of course, as I've said before, the technique of the film ['Father Movie'] is nothing to write home about." I answered, "Well yes, but I think that's what gives it its power—in other words, it doesn't conform to any text book standards, but instead to the heart, the experience of the event and my feelings towards it as I filmed." And he agreed. For "Father Movie" is a film made (except for prelude) at my father's death; long sequences of it were shot literally weeping & driving (one hand on camera, one on wheel) through town by old places he'd lived in. For such a mode or "technique," so much the opposite of anything planned, I recall a prose line from Yeats: "When heroism returns to the age, its first sign shall be technical sincerity." I've never entirely understood what Yeats meant, but as time's passed the line's last words have come to represent a kind of personal touchstone for art. Not for heroism—which I don't understand—but to distinguish internal soul from external formula. Surely this is applicable in film, where almost any Hollywood or other "theatrical" movie works from the latter & those of our most masterful contemporaries—say Brakhage and Kubelka—invariably bear the stamp of the former. Fine or rough, heavy or ethereal, there is always at base an unregretful uncompromising heart & consciousness. It is negligent of all but its own earnest rhythmic awareness; and that, after all, may be what we were looking for—what one person and no other can give us.

Et Cetera

Michael Fleishman was recently appointed Director for the SCAC Media Arts Center. Michael, who originally joined the Media Arts Center staff as Exhibitions Coordinator in January, 1981, assumed the Director's chair on January 22, 1982. Before coming to South Carolina, Michael was the Media Arts Coordinator at the Ohio Arts Council and he was also the Coordinator of Appalachian Regional Media Center in Athens, Ohio, where he had previously been a graduate student at Ohio University in the Film Department. Michael replaces Nan Robinson, who left the directorship of MAC to work independently as a filmmaker.

Steve Lewis took over his new duties as Assistant Arts Coordinator at the SCAC Media Arts Center on January 1, 1982. Steve joined the MAC staff in July, 1980, as an Assistant Media Arts Coordinator on a temporary basis. Steve came to SCAC from Charleston, South Carolina.

The Southern Circuit is neither gone nor forgotten according to Susan Leonard who administers the Circuit at the SCAC Media Arts Centers. Planning is currently underway for the Southern Circuit 1982-83 with the first show scheduled for September. Organizations in South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Alabama, and Louisiana have expressed interest in remaining or becoming sponsors/sites for this year's series. This year, the Southern Circuit will attempt to obtain funding from private and corporate sources in the

Southeast with approximately 50% of funds coming from the sponsoring organizations. The structure for the series will remain basically unchanged although guest filmmakers may not be limited to Americans this year. For more information, please contact Susan Leonard, SCAC Media Arts Center, 1800 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC, 29201, (803) 758-7942.

The Southern Arts Federation is planning a fall tour of independent films and filmmakers to ten Southeastern states. The tour's purpose will be to introduce new audiences to independent film—dramatic, documentary, animation, and experimental.

Four filmmakers will be selected, with at least two coming from Southeastern states. Funding for this project is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and state arts agencies in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

For more information contact the Southern Arts Federation, Visual Arts Program, 1401 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 122, Atlanta, Georgia, 30309, or phone (404) 874-7244.

COMING IN THE SUMMER ISSUE:

Interview with
Film Editor Ellen Hovde

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visual information, will provide, when combined with computer programming, an extraordinary opportunity for individualized learning. In addition to producing videodiscs, ITL will undertake a comprehensive program of software development, hardware modification, and educational research in order to improve current and future programs. NYIT also maintains a Video Center and Computer Graphics Laboratory.

ITL's research is intended to explore the potential of interactive video as part of new videotext experiments which use cable, telephone, or computer networks to link people with a central source of information. The technical staff is particularly interested in establishing joint ventures with other companies to design interfaces between interactive media as well as to develop more "user-friendly" technology.

The Interactive Technologies Laboratory is located on Long Island, 30 minutes from Manhattan, on the Old Westbury Campus of NYIT, which is a private, non-profit, educational institution.

For more information contact Jim St. Lawrence at New York Institute of Technology, Interactive Technologies Laboratory, Old Westbury, NY 11568, or call (516) 686-7861.



The darkness and roughness of images, blown up from Super 8, serve to heighten the sense of captivity in Gordon Ball's MEXICAN JAIL FOOTAGE.

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South Carolina Arts Commission, 1800 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC 29201. The viewpoints expressed in this issue do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the South Carolina Arts Commission.

The South Carolina Arts Commission is a state agency which promotes the visual, literary, performing and media arts in South Carolina. The SCAC Media Arts Center supports media artists and media arts in a ten-state southeastern region,

which includes Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, as well as South Carolina. Both SCAC and SCACMAC receive funds from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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